

## Message Text

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67-S

ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7696

INFO USMISSION USNATO

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L OSLO 0331

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, IC, NO

SUBJ: REMARKS OF ICELANDIC PRIME MINISTER ABOUT KEFLAVIK

REF: OSLO 0328

1. NORWAY'S STATE TELEVISION NETWORK, NRK, CARRIED AN INTERVIEW ON JANUARY 21 WITH ICELAND'S PRIME MINISTER, OLAFUR JOHANNESSEN, OBTAINED BY ITS CORRESPONDENT IN REYKJAVIK. WHILE TALKING TO THE PRIME MINISTER, THE CORRESPONDENT ALSO MANAGED TO INTERVIEW THE LEADER OF THE ORGANIZATION OF LIBERALS AND LEFTISTS, HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON, WHO PASSED BY ON HIS WAY TO THE ALLTING. WHILE MUCH OF THE INTERVIEW (QUOTED BELOW) REPRESENTS THE VIEWS OF THE INTERVIEWER, THERE WERE SOME COMMENTS OF INTEREST BY BOTH ICELANDIC OFFICIALS.

2. THIS SAME INTERVIEWER SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS VIBE (WHO WILL BE ACCOMPANYING FOREIGN MINISTER FRYDENLUND TO ICELAND ON FEBRUARY 17) THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRESENT STRATEGY IS TO GAIN TIME. TO GO BACK ON HIS PARTY'S POSITION THAT KEFLAVIK MUST BE CLOSED DOWN WOULD BREAK UP THE COALITION. HIS TACTIC, IN THE NRK VIEW, IS RATHER TO POINT TO A LONG-TERM GOAL OF ELIMINATING  
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THE BASE ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT ANY DECISIONS TO REACH

THIS GOAL MAY BE REVIEWED LATER. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED IF VIBE ACCEPTED THIS RATHER OPTIMISTIC INTERPRETATION.

3. BEGIN TEXT:

NRK: IT WAS THE ICELANDIC GOVERNMENT WHICH ASKED FOR A POSTPONE-MENT OF THE NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE IT, AMONG OTHER THINGS, NEEDS MORE TIME TO FIND A SOLUTION WHICH THE THREE PARTIES IN THE GOVERNMENT CAN SUPPORT IN ORDER TO AVOID A GOVERNMENT CRISIS.

TO NRK MR. JOHANNESSON SAYS THAT A BASE ON THE ORKNEYS PERHAPS CAN BE AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE KEFLAVIK BASE. THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO USE THE KEFLAVIK BASE, BUT THEY WILL HAVE TO LEAVE THE BASE, AND I SEE THE ORKNEWS AS A POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE.

JOHANNESSON: I THINK IT IS LIKELY (SANNSYNLIG) THAT ONE WILL CHANGE TO THE ORKNEYS, BUT I CANNOT SAY ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

NRK: A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO ALLTING REPRESENTATIVE HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON REVEALED THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD PRESENTED A COMPROMISE PROPOSAL. THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO REDUCE THE AMERICAN CONTINGENT OF 3200 MEN AT KEFLAVIK TO THE EXTENT THAT ICELAND IS READY TO PROVIDE ADEQUATE REPLACEMENTS. AMERICAN TROOPS ARE TO LIVE AT THE BASE ONLY, AND THE BASE WILL BE DIVIDED INTO A MILITARY AND A CIVILIAN AREA. THE ICELANDIC PRIME MINISTER WILL NOT CONFIRM THE PROPOSAL BUT HE DOES NOT DENY IT EITHER.

JOHANNESSON: NO, I THINK THAT IS BETTER TO SPEAK WITH HANNIBAL (VALDIMARSSON) ABOUT THAT.

NRK: AND HERE IS HANNIBAL VALDIMARSSON, ON HIS WAY TO THE ALLTING. I HAVE THE INFORMATION DIRECTLY FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HE CLAIMS. VALDIMARSSON'S PARTY IS ONE OF THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES. HE BELIEVES ICELAND CANNOT ACCEPT THE AMERICAN PROPOSAL.

VALDIMARSSON: NO, NOT IN ITS PRESENT FORM. BUT WE ARE STILL IN THE MIDST OF NEGOTIATIONS, AND WE STILL EXPECT OTHER EFFORTS FROM THE AMERICANS.

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NRK: VALDIMARSSON ADMITS HE DOES NOT FAVOR THE AMERICAN PROPOSAL. THE COMPROMISE HE FAVORS THE MOST, AND THE ONE MOST LIKELY TO BE ACCEPTED BY THE GOVERNMENT PARTIES, IS A GRADUAL REMOVAL (AVVIK-LING) OF THE AMERICAN FORCES OVER A COUPLE OF YEARS. THIS WAY THERE WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE BASE ISSUE IN VIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION.

JOHANNESSON: I COULD THINK OF A SITUATION WHERE THEY HAD THE SAME RIGHTS AS IN NORWAY WHERE THEY CAN MAKE BRIEF STOPS AT A BASE.

AND THEN THEY MIGHT HAVE SPECIAL PERSONNEL TO HANDLE NECESSARY MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION OF THESE AIRCRAFT WHICH WE REALIZE THEY DO NOT WANT OTHERS TO COME CLOSE TO.

NRK: AND THEN THE PRIME MINISTER THINKS THAT THE BASE COULD BE MOVED TO THE ORKNEYS. THIS WOULD BE VERY COSTLY FOR THE U.S., IT WOULD TAKE A COUPLE OF YEARS, AND THE MILITARY LOCATION WOULD NOT BE AS GOOD AS KEFLAVIK. THERE IS TODAY A SMALL AIRFIELD AT THE ORKNEYS WHICH IS USED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, FOR CIVILIAN AIR TRAFFIC. THE QUESTION OF EXPANSION OF OR CHANGE OF LOCATION OF THIS AIRFIELD, REMAINS UNANSWERED BY THOSE WE HAVE CONTACTED TODAY. NOT ONLY THE ICELANDERS SUGGEST THE ORKNEYS, OLAFUR JOHANNESSON SAYS.

JOHANNESSON: BUT IT IS NO SECRET THAT THE ORKNEYS HAVE BEEN MENTIONED IN THIS CONNECTION.

NRK: THE AMERICANS HAVE MENTIONED IT TO YOU?

JOHANNESSON: PERHAPS NOT ONLY THE AMERICANS, BUT OTHER NATO (PEOPLE) PERHAPS.

NRK: THIS ALTERNATIVE HAS NOT BEEN DISCUSSED IN THE NORWEGIAN FOREIGN OFFICE, SAYS UNDERSECRETARY THORVALD STOLTENBERG OF THE NORWEGIAN DEFENSE MINISTRY... IN ICELAND A PRIVATE PROPOSAL HAS BEEN SET\*FORTH SUGGESTING THAT THE BASE BE MOVED TO AN UNINHABITED AREA IN NORTH EAST ICELAND. THIS PLAN IS UNREALISTIC, ACCORDING TO POLITICIANS WE HAVE TALKED WITH. THE ICELANDERS FOLLOW THE KEFLAVIK BASE NEGOTIATIONS WITH INTEREST. A MAJOR CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN STARTED TO COLLECT SIGNATURES IN FAVOR OF KEEPING THE BASE AND THE AMERICANS IN FEAR OF RELATIONS WITH THE USSR. IN THE COURSE OF ONLY A FEW DAYS THIS CAMPAIGN HAS COLLECTED THOUSANDS OF SIGNATURES. THE ICELANDIC ALLTING (NATIONAL ASSEMBLY) MET AFTER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS TODAY. IN THE ALLTING THERE IS NO MAJORITY  
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TODAY FOR A CANCELLATION OF THE BASE AGREEMENT, BUT THE QUESTION IS WHICH COMPROMISE CAN BE REACHED. THE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S. WILL HAVE TO BE CLARIFIED SOON WITH REGARD TO THE CONTENTS, OR ASPECTS, OF A TREATY REVISION. END TEXT.  
BYRNE

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NNN

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